

2019

# William J. Bridge: University Citizen Par Excellence

Charles E. Curran

*Southern Methodist University, Perkins School of Theology, ccurran@smu.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.smu.edu/smulr>

Part of the [Law Commons](#)

## Recommended Citation

Charles E. Curran, *William J. Bridge: University Citizen Par Excellence*, 72 SMU L. REV. 5 (2019)  
<https://scholar.smu.edu/smulr/vol72/iss1/3>

This Tribute is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Journals at SMU Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in SMU Law Review by an authorized administrator of SMU Scholar. For more information, please visit <http://digitalrepository.smu.edu>.

# WILLIAM J. BRIDGE: UNIVERSITY CITIZEN PAR EXCELLENCE

*Charles E. Curran\**

**I**N my judgment, a very significant aspect of the SMU ethos is the commitment of many faculty of the Dedman School of Law to the good of the university as a whole. Some university law schools have their own campus and are far removed from the main campus of the institution. In many universities, the law school tends to be its own reality, isolated from the rest of the university. But in my experience, many SMU law faculty go out of their way to be involved in the life and work of the university as a whole. Bill Bridge is an outstanding example of a law school faculty member who has been an excellent university citizen.

Bill has been actively involved in the work of the SMU Faculty Senate. He has served as president of the Faculty Senate. For many years, he worked with one of its most important committees—the Faculty Ethics and Tenure Committee. As an academic, he appreciates the importance of academic freedom and has worked to protect and promote academic freedom on the SMU campus. Bill was a member and leader of the SMU chapter of the American Association of University Professors. He is deeply concerned about the university as an important institution in our broader society.

Bill was actively involved in the Town and Gown Club on campus and served as its president. He was invited to speak at the annual dinner for President’s Scholars, without doubt the most prestigious undergraduate group on campus. With another law school professor, he taught a course on ministerial legal ethics at the Perkins School of Theology.

SMU has appreciated Bill’s service to the university. He has received the “M” Award—the most highly prized recognition bestowed upon students, faculty, staff and administrators on the SMU Campus.”<sup>1</sup> A recipient’s efforts must have been continuous during his years at SMU and not limited to a narrower vested interest.<sup>2</sup> Bill was also a very early recipient of the SMU Faculty Club’s Mentor Supereminens Award, which “[r]ecognizes faculty for exceptional mentoring of the university’s faculty

---

\* Elizabeth Scurlock University Professor of Human Values, Southern Methodist University.

1. *Congratulations to the 2018 M Award Recipients*, SMU DEDMAN C. HUMAN. & SCI. (June 25, 2018), <https://blog.smu.edu/dedmancollege/2018/07/10/congratulations-to-the-2018-m-award-recipients/>.

2. *Id.*

and students.”<sup>3</sup>

Bill’s exemplary commitment as a university citizen follows from his broad intellectual interests. He is truly a renaissance person, deeply concerned about the life of the mind. He reads broadly and is conversant in many different areas and subjects. As an undergraduate at Georgetown University, Bill was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and has been an active member of the SMU chapter.

I first met Bill in 1990 when I interviewed for the position of Professor of Human Values. Bill was a member of the search committee and was chosen to be one of the two respondents to my paper on Christian social ethics. I was somewhat surprised when I received my schedule before the interview that a law professor was responding to my paper. But his response was very knowledgeable, scholarly, and probing.

One of Bill’s many interests on the wider campus has been ethics. He has served on the Faculty Advisory Committee of the Maguire Center for Ethics and Public Responsibility since its inception. He has also played a leading role in the Annual Conference of the Professions, which brings together from the Dallas area members of the three professions of clergy, lawyers, and doctors.

My closest association with Bill on campus has been our involvement in the Ethics Colloquy, which has been in existence on this campus for almost fifty years. Today, the Ethics Colloquy meets twice each semester to discuss a paper or work in progress from one of our members. The purpose of the colloquy is to promote interdisciplinary discussion of ethical issues. Our participants come from philosophy, religious studies, theology, law, political science, and anthropology, as well as some other disciplines. The law contingent has been one of the major groups participating in the work of the colloquy, with Bill as its most regular attendee. With his broad interests, insightful mind, and probing intellect, he has been a valuable contributor to the colloquy. His dialogical approach and thoughtful comments have been a gift to the ongoing work of the colloquy. At the meeting that he announced his forthcoming retirement and move to Portland, Oregon, a member of the colloquy from Southwestern Medical School blurted out, “Bill, you can’t leave us!”

I know from many of his law colleagues the respect they have for Bill. His commitment to his many students is well-known. On a good number of social occasions, I have been with him when he has casually met former students, some from years back. I was amazed that he knew them by name and even asked about their families. I am grateful for this opportunity to express my appreciation for Bill and to acquaint people in the law school with the fact that Bill Bridge has also been an exemplary university citizen on the SMU campus.

---

3. *Awards*, SMU FAC. CLUB, <https://www.smu.edu/Orgs/FacultyClub/Awards> (last visited Jan. 1, 2019).